

**Written Testimony from Franca Muller Paz, Baltimore City Public Schools Teacher,  
District 45**

Testimony in Support of House Bill 137

Civil Actions - Civil Immunity - Educator Intervention

House Judiciary Committee

March 23, 2023

1:00pm

**Position: FAVORABLE**

To the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee:

My name is Franca Muller Paz and I am writing in support of HB 137, legislation that would protect administrative, educational, and school support staff from civil liability for personal injury or property damage claims that may arise from their response to altercations in the attempt to keep children safe.

I am in my 13th year of teaching and in my 10th year as a Spanish teacher in Baltimore City Public Schools. I am also the elected Building Representative at my school.

As a Building Representative, I often have to tell teachers a sad truth, that when they observe a fight, that they are not protected if they try to interfere. Therefore, they shouldn't get involved because they will have no legal protections.

I have NEVER listened to this advice, because I can't. When you see two students harming each other, it is instinct, you have to protect them both. I could not live with myself, if I stood by and watched young people violently hurt one another.

I also want to share the story of a fellow teacher at my school. Here are his words:

"I am in my 24th year of teaching and in my 19th year as a teacher at Baltimore City College. I am also a relatively large man, and I have unfortunately needed to use my size at times to protect students from each other. Physical altercations occur at all schools, and when these occur between adult-sized high school students, significant damage can be done. Last year, I witnessed one such altercation as I left the building. Our school police officer was already working to split up one part of a large fight, and I saw that I was the only adult in the vicinity who was willing to intervene as two students fought on the pavement. Years ago, a student's head slammed to the ground during a physical altercation a few rooms down from me, resulting in a significant TBI. This crossed my mind as I immediately worked to separate the two individuals. Fortunately, I

was able to pull them apart from each other and once they were separated, another adult was willing to get involved and talk to one student while I walked the other away. No one ended up being significantly hurt on this occasion, and I am glad that I was able to intervene to help keep our students safe.”

I have worked at an alternative school where fights took place daily & now, I am at a much more peaceful place where fights only take place on rare occasions. Every time I have intervened, putting my body on the line to protect OUR kids, I have needed to assume that legal risk, but I deserve to be protected. For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on SB137.

Sincerely,

Franca Muller Paz  
BCPSS Teacher and BTU Building Representative  
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Notes: